



**STATEMENT BY DR. ARJUN KARKI, CO-ORDINATOR OF LDC WATCH  
AT THE MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE OF THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES  
ON THE MIDTERM COMPREHENSIVE GLOBAL REVIEW OF THE  
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR THE LDCS FOR  
THE DECADE 2001-2010**

**Cotonou, Republic of Benin  
5-8 June 2006**

Madame Chair Foreign Minister of Republic of Benin,  
UN Undersecretary General for LDCs, LLDCs and SISs,  
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen.

LDC Watch is an alliance of regional and national civil society organisations based in the Least Developed Countries with support from development partner countries. It was established after the Third UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) in Brussels, 2001. LDC Watch monitors the implementation of the Brussels Plan of Action (BPoA), to ensure that civil society is included in this implementation, and acts as a coordinating group for LDC civil society activities; LDC Watch also has a programme of lobbying, networking and advocacy at national and international levels to ensure that the BPoA is implemented by LDC governments and their development partners.

Madame Chair,

In defining the the category of LDCs in 1971, the United Nations identified 24 LDCs. Today, there are 50 LDCs where 81% of the population lives on less than US\$2 a day. The doubling of LDCs since the category was established indicates the failure of aid and development policies to reverse the deterioration of socio-economic conditions in vulnerable countries, and to stop other countries from becoming poorer.

As we are all aware, at the Third UN Conference on the LDCs in Brussels in May 2001, the BPoA was agreed, inclusive of values, principles and objectives of the Millennium Declaration. The BPoA aims to ensure that the LDCs achieve sustainable development by 2010 and stipulates that "its success will be judged by its contribution to progress of LDCs toward achieving international development targets, as well as their graduation from the list of LDCs". Five years later, reviewing the first half of the targeted decade, the scenario looks just as bleak urging all the more attention and commitment of all the key stakeholders. The ever growing wave of globalization and its devastating impact still marginalizes the LDCs which in

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turn has led to the perpetuation of poverty and underdevelopment in these countries. Moreover, much needed international support to tackle pre and post conflict challenges and its inherent vulnerabilities and constraints, has also remained inadequate. LDC Watch is convinced that if the MDGs are not achieved in LDCs, they cannot be achieved overall. It is also certain that targets for poverty eradication cannot be met without a clear focus on the special problems, concerns and potentials of LDCs.

Madame Chair,

Bearing in mind that the BPOA recognizes the vital role that civil society has to play in its implementation and follow-up, LDC Watch in turn believes that civil society inputs and interventions will be crucial in order to ensure a thorough assessment of progress and to devise effective and appropriate campaign, lobbying and advocacy strategies for the way forward thus meeting the intended targets once and for all. In this context, LDC Watch calls on all respective Governments and development partners to consider and deliver on the following demands:

**Good Governance:** We call for greater transparency in policy and decision making with emphasis on pro-poor and pro-people policies. Adequate representation and participation of women in policy and decision making is imperative. We call for democratization of the IFIs and the WTO and reform of the UN to give more voice to the LDCs. We want strong governments in LDCs that are responsive and accountable to their own people.

**Debt Cancellation:** We call for unconditional debt cancellation because simply put, we just don't owe. In fact, we've already paid back multifold and it is us who are entitled to recompense in return. But debt cancellation of itself is not enough.

**Trade Justice:** We call for fair trading rules that discriminate positively and realistically towards the interests of LDCs, and which recognises the central role played by women in production and trade, as the current system is lopsided and favours rich countries. Trade liberalization, aid for trade, export dumping and bilateral trade agreements only make poor countries poorer. None of today's industrialized countries built their economies under such conditions. On the contrary their very foundation was achieved behind protective screens and exploited materials.

**Human, Institutional and Productive Capacity:** We call for greater prioritization of LDCs as the beneficiaries of capacity building programmes. Demand driven and responsive initiatives need to be encouraged, based on principles of gender justice and equality, so that we can gain from our investments and even generate our own wealth. We also believe in providing greater importance to, and investment in, the health and education sectors as they are fundamental components that pave the way for development.

Madame Chair,

We should not overlook the fact that the BPoA was a refreshed and reassured commitment by the Governments against the background of lack of progress in socio-economic development in the LDCs and in the implementation of the Paris Programme of Action for the 1990s. The challenge and pressure of implementing the BPoA is hence an acid test to uphold the political will and credibility of the concerned Governments and development partners. Let us not see ourselves once again acknowledging failure in 2010, paying lip service with another Programme of Action, extending the target timeline to another decade. Let us strive to see 2010 free of LDCs!

Thank you.

7 June 2006